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Tuesday, May 2, 1967

Allen-Scott Report

Red Ships In Cuba Called Mystery

By ROBERT S. ALLEN
and PAUL SCOTT



Mr. Allen

WASHINGTON, May 1: A sudden and mystic large increase in the number of Soviet bloc ships has been arriving in Cuba.

More than 70 vessels — the largest number since just before the October 1962 missile crisis — docked at the island's major ports in a seven-day period late last month.

Large quantities of military supplies and thousands of additional Soviet personnel were unloaded from these ships, which included several with wide hatches capable of transporting intermediate range ballistic missiles.

All unloading was done usually at night and under tightest secrecy, with numerous troops guarding the docks and roads leading to them.

In direct response to this apparent big armament build-up, the U.S. has doubled the number of high-level reconnaissance flights in an effort to obtain additional information.

So far, efforts to ascertain whether the shipments include missiles have been unsuccessful.

Cuban refugees, who sounded the first alarm about the increased military shipments, claim they do include missiles. Under discussion in inner White House councils are possible low-level reconnaissance flights to obtain more precise photos of areas where missiles might be stored.

As happened in the Kennedy administration in 1962, the Johnson administration is keeping a high secrecy lid on this latest foreboding Cuban development.

Members of Congress got the first hint of the matter more or less accidentally when General Robert Porter, head of the U.S. Southern Command testified of the new \$3,126 billion foreign aid appropriation at a closed-door meeting of the House Foreign Affairs Committee.

When asked "What is going on in Cuba now," he replied:

"We are doing everything we can to find out. Intelligence is deeply concerned over the increased number of Soviet bloc ships arriving at Cuban ports in recent weeks. During one seven-day period, between 70 and 75 vessels arrived with vast amounts of military supplies and additional Soviet troops.

"This traffic represents the largest number of Soviet bloc ship arrivals in Cuba since the 1962 crisis."

Expressing reluctance to go into further detail, General Porter assured the legislators, "Intensive reconnaissance measures are being taken to determine the nature and type of this new Soviet military build-up."

Members of General Porter's staff later explained that he was not able to tell the committee

any more because of a high-level ban on talking. Porter stated this silence was imposed by Pentagon authorities.

This column can report that U.S. reconnaissance planes have taken dozens of pictures of Soviet bloc ships. Also the Defense Intelligence Agency has received startling information from Cuban refugees. The reliability of these reports is in the process of being checked.

One, reportedly an eye-witness account, claims that in one week the refugees saw 13 Russian ships in one Cuban port, nine in another, and eight in a third port. These refugees, recently arrived from Cuba, also asserted they saw several large tractor-trailer type trucks transporting large missiles on a road some 20 miles from Havana.

When the refugees were spotted by Cuban troops guarding the highway, they were ordered to turn around and go in another direction. They did that, and shortly thereafter encountered a long truck convoy with hundreds of newly-arrived Soviet military personnel.

Another recent Cuban refugee reported that he worked for several months in northwest Cuba building missile-launching platforms, silo blocks and installing wiring equipment for missile installations.

Although sharply restricted in what he could relate about the sinister Soviet build-up, General Porter was able to fully brief the House committee on Castro's expanded efforts to send guerrillas and terrorists to other Latin American countries.

"Efforts to stimulate, coordinate and unify the Communist movement, subversion, and terror activities in Latin America are aggressively underway," said Porter. "A permanent apparatus — the Latin American Solidarity Organization (LASO) — was established as a by-product of the 1966 Havana Tricontinental Conference. LASO's operational base is in Havana and its objective is to encourage, support and coordinate Communist subversion in the hemisphere. LASO is actively pursuing the goals for which it was created.

"Cuba has already trained several thousand terrorists and guerrillas who are prepared to initiate and support disorders, riots and insurgency whenever the situation is ripe, and that may be very soon."

Asked what might be expected in the near future, General Porter replied:

"One of Castro's objectives will be to assist the Viet Cong by diverting U.S. attention and resources to other critical areas. The Communists know that events in Vietnam will have a direct bearing on the success or failure of their campaign in Latin America."

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